



# Barli Development Institute for Rural Women



The Barli Development Institute for Rural Women empowers young rural and tribal women to become agents of social change through the acquisition of a wide range of skills and knowledge needed to improve the lives of their families, their communities and themselves.



'Barli' is a very common name among tribal women in the districts where many trainees come from. Barli denotes the central pillar which supports the tribal house typical of these areas, highlighting the belief of the Institute that women are the central pillars of society.

Based in Indore, the Institute has completed 85 residential training programmes for more than 1,600 young women from 320 villages of Madhya Pradesh and other parts of India. Priority is given to the socially and economically disadvantaged, i.e., 'scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward classes', the physically challenged, orphans, widows, divorcees, the abused and the neglected.

# Increased Prosperity In Rural India is Only Possible through the Education and Empowerment of Rural Women

## Goals and Objectives

The Institute's curriculum is designed to achieve the following goals and objectives:

To promote change in the traditional attitudes and practices that impede the advancement of women to live in equality, with dignity and security.

To provide trainees with basic skills and knowledge in the areas of health and nutrition,

income-generation, increase literacy, and gain knowledge on environmental awareness and protection

To empower trainees to become agents of change within their communities, with the capacity to recognise and avail opportunities for the improvement of social and economic conditions.



*The central focus of these goals and objectives is women.*

*They are the first educators of their children, therefore, their training and education affects the thoughts and behaviour of the next generation of men and women.*

## Training Programmes and Methodology

The Institute conducts two major types of training programmes; one for Community Volunteers who are illiterate or semi-literate and the other for Grassroots Trainers who have either passed high school or are dropped out. These courses are residential and free of cost.

The Community Volunteers undergo a six-month training to enhance their knowledge, skills and experience of literacy, health, environmental education and personality development. They are also taught income generating and vocational skills to improve the quality of life for themselves, their families and their communities. At the end of the course the trainees appear in a Vocational Exam under the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).

The Grassroot Trainer course lasts for one year, with two semesters. In the first semester participants

take the same courses as the Community Volunteers by assisting the trainers to conduct the courses. In the second semester, they facilitate the training for the Community Volunteers and learn to replicate the same in their own communities. They also go through one year vocational certificate course from NIOS.

In order to foster development in the rural communities, the Institute offers short-term courses and orientation programmes to parents, family members, grassroots leaders, members of local institutions, social workers, self-help groups and NGOs.

With a life-cycle approach, all subjects are taught holistically, in an integrated manner, using participatory and peer-tutoring methods in an enabling environment

To contribute to their societies, women require not only knowledge, experience and skills but also the inculcation of universal ethical values to develop a variety of capacities

### Personality Development

Trainees learn and experience how to bring about positive changes in their families and communities by developing their own personality by:

Development of self esteem and confidence; acquiring abilities to consult and make decisions independently, emotional maturity, and development of communication skills like public speaking, approaching officials and unknown persons.

Educational and training skills; knowledge, attitude, and practices that lead to advancement in material well-being; learning how to access their rights, schemes and making use of existing facilities for their development; acquiring knowledge of ways and means to get loans; form and run micro credit groups; set-up and manage small business and marketing; learning on group decision-making through a process of consultation that encourages the consideration of a wide range of ideas, courtesy, openness and an appreciation of the group's decision above a personal point of view.

Development of moral leadership; setting and achieving individual goals to develop themselves, their families and communities; internalising universal values such as unity in diversity, peace, love and nonviolence, gender equality, equality of all

peoples, service to community, freedom from prejudice and respect for all cultures and religions. At



the same time they are encouraged to identify positive elements in their culture which need to be preserved and strengthened.

*Sayati of Jhabua district wrote: When my husband and myself went to repay the bank loan that we had borrowed for digging a well, the bank officials could not believe that a girl with no formal education could be so honest and confident to manage banking so efficiently. "*

### Literacy

Literacy is at the heart of all the training programmes and is interwoven into all subjects at the Barli institute. Most of the trainees arrive illiterate, but pass written and practical vocational exams after only six months of training. Trainees learn to read, write and understand simple books, forms, notices, messages, letters and signs, they also learn basic arithmetic, weights, measures and time.

Through practical application, trainees learn to keep records, make patterns according to measurements, calculate stock, estimate costs, write a receipt, manage accounts and approach a



*Sayki Dodwa of Dhar district says: "Being trained at Barli is like getting a new life. Before training I was in .9 complete dark, but now I find myself in the light. Everything is different. I can read, write, and even calculate! teach my three brothers to read and write every night by candle light, as we do not have electric power.. I read some books of my brothers and I am preparing to appear in the 5th standard exam. "*

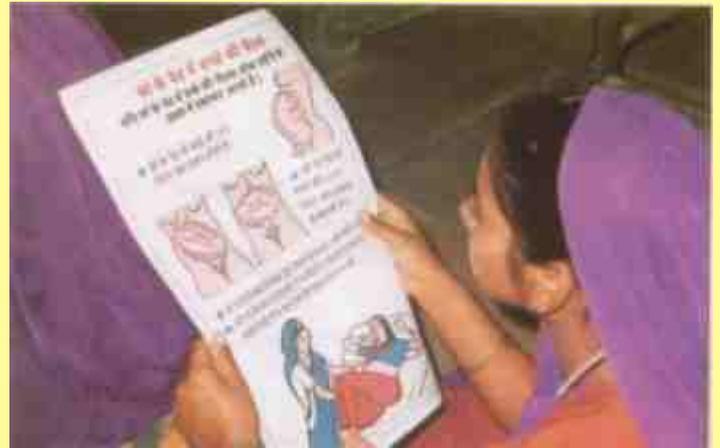
Government official with a request.

Once an illiterate trainee becomes literate at the Institute, she appears in the NIOS vocational exam in cutting and tailoring. This has a total of 200 marks that

includes theory (30 marks), Internal Assessment (80 marks) and Practical (90 marks). Grassroots Trainers also appear in a typing exam in both English and Hindi.

## Health and Hygiene

Health and hygiene form a substantial part of the curriculum. Great emphasis is placed on encouraging healthy traditional practices and dispelling harmful myths. Trainees learn to promote personal, home and community hygiene and sanitation. They acquire knowledge of common diseases and their prevention with good nutrition, safe drinking water and a healthy lifestyle. They also learn about pre and post-natal care, child immunisation, spacing of children, raising healthy children and adolescents with a gender sensitive perspective.



## Vocational Training

Community Volunteers learn cutting and tailoring/dress making, along with reviving and developing ethnic arts and crafts. Some of them also choose fabric design, batik, block and screen printing, hand and machine embroidery and bead work. Making herbal detergents, shampoos and henna powder, growing and processing vegetables are some other income generating skills.

Upon completing their vocational courses, the Community Volunteers appear in a NIOS examination for cutting and tailoring and the Grassroots Trainers, who also learn about computers, appear in typing



exams. On passing, the trainees become qualified and receive a certificate that helps them to get employment.



*Kammi Chauhan of Jhabua district: I graduated in 1988, came home and lovingly persuaded my husband to stop drinking alcohol and to work together. Since then we have been working together as equal partners. I have taught him to sew, we have a shop in the centre of the village market and the income is enough to support our family. I now teach dressmaking to girls free of charge. We teach our children about cleanliness and we have built a new house. We all keep our house clean. We are very happy with the progress we have made. "*

## Environment

Caring for the environment is taught as a spiritual responsibility with a focus on sustainable development. In the classroom, the women are exposed to appropriate and sustainable solutions to the current problems of forest degradation, the depletion of groundwater resources and rainfall dependant vegetable gardening.

Every morning for two hours, trainees learn to grow, dry, process, store and preserve fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices and lentils. They gain practical experience in rain-water harvesting, irrigation, waste management through composting, nursery development and plant propagation,



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*Kiran Arya of Khargone district: 'After returning home, I was able to save some trees that the farmers wanted to cut down. They listened to my arguments about the benefits of each tree and the farmers left the trees standing. I could save some trees.'*

## Cooking with the Sun



Barli has been successfully experimenting with solar cookers for over 15 years. Since 1998 the Institute has developed its kitchen tailored to solar cooking, and has installed 2 large Scheffler parabolic cookers in this kitchen. For about 300 days a year,

*Feedback from the users: "Solar cookers allow us to escape the daily, back-breaking work of fuel gathering, risk of rape and sexual abuse, risk of children being burned ... and help prevent the loss of forests. We save 200-300 rupees per month and 3-4 hours of time per day. These are gender friendly, smokeless and need very little attention."*

Barli prepares all its meals for 100 persons per day with solar cookers, saving up to 9 cylinders of cooking gas or 900 kilograms of wood each month.

Solar cookers help women to escape the daily, back-breaking work of fuel gathering, to preserve forest and woodlands and to reduce air pollution.

The Institute makes SK 14 parabolic domestic solar cookers. Over 50 of these have been purchased by the graduates who are making optimum use of them in their villages, and who introduce and demonstrate the benefits of solar cooking to their neighbouring communities.



## Orientation of Family

In the middle of every six-month course, we invite the parents, guardians or husbands of the trainees for a 3-day orientation and programme, so that they can observe the Institute's activities and environment, interact with the staff and give their views and input. This helps in gaining support and building trust in the communities.

UNICEF; in its publication, 'International Network for Girls NY 2000', recognising the good practices of NGOs, cited the Institute's example of involvement of parents as a key strategy in witnessing the positive effects of education on their daughters.



*Bayja Solanki's husband from Dhar district says: "I am very happy that my wife keeps the house clean and gives our children a good education. She also takes care of their diet and their clothes. Now that our daughter is four years old, we are sending her to school. Our people do not send their daughters to school. This has happened due to my wife's training at the Barli Institute. "*

## Follow-up, Monitoring and Evaluation

Barli's programme of graduate support is called "Consultation, Action, Reflection". As part of this programme, Barli's staff members spend more than 4 months in the villages each year, monitoring former trainees and, at the same time, evaluating the results of the training through surveys and related research.

The majority of Barli's trainees arrive illiterate but almost 100% go home functionally literate.

### Once back in the villages:

95% use their new skills to generate income, out of which 50% set up small businesses, 9% get jobs and the rest are self-employed, waged workers or are assisting their own families in farming or small business.



### A better status of health and hygiene is Demonstrated with:

97% of Barli's graduates use safe drinking water 70% include leafy vegetables in their diets

70% include leafy vegetables in their diets

40% grow and sell vegetables

### As a result of work done by graduates in their communities:

Guinea worm has been eliminated from 302 villages, in collaboration with the government

Literacy rates have increased in the villages by 12% overall and by 24% for women. The percentage of school dropouts that pass the NIOS exam is 100% amongst those who were literate and 80-85 % amongst those who were illiterate.

The number of children immunised against diphtheria, BCG, measles and polio has increased from





just over 20% to over 60%

More than 150 children with cleft palates have been surgically treated by a plastic surgeon who conducts free surgeries

In one year, through the use of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) infant deaths decreased from 17% to 2.6%

### Over 90% of the Institutes graduates:

Practice the correct treatments for malaria and snakebite

Actively share their new knowledge of better pre and post-natal care

Are involved in forming women's groups

Are organising events that celebrate Women's Day, Literacy Day and Environment Day every year

Are improving the environment

Are helping to increase the female literacy rate in their communities

Are involved in local social and economic development activities

## Sustainability

The Institute raises around Rs2 lakh each year, contributing to its own self-sufficiency by growing most of its own food needs, making and selling food products, handicrafts such as batik and block printed dress materials, embroidered furnishings and beadwork, conference folders and bags that are made from recycled materials..

The capacity building of women at the grassroots level has a major ripple effect in society.

The Barli training model can be replicated in other areas.

The environmental and health skills imparted to women are clean and sustainable.

Literacy is sustained by circulating a regular newsletter called 'Kokila' (Nightingale) to over 300 communities. It covers current news from the Institute, graduate success stories, including their views and news, folk theme songs composed by the graduates on all related development issues, announcements of forthcoming training programmes and admission

## Recognition and Achievements

Since 1990, the Institute has been a placement agency for Masters of Social Work students.

Accredited to the NIOS for its vocational courses.

In 1990, the literacy methodology used at the Institute was adopted by the University of Leicester, U.K.

In 1992, UNEP conferred the Institute with the Global 500 Roll of Honour for outstanding environmental achievements in helping to eradicate Guinea Worm.

In 1994, the Institute was in UNESCO's INNOV database as one of the 81 successful basic education projects in developing countries.

UNICEF praised the good example of parent involvement by the Institute as a key strategy for "Empowerment through Good Practices" in an insert: Action for Girls, Vol. 1 No.2 Spring 2000.



### Staff and Volunteers

The Institute has 20 full-time staff. All trainers are graduates of the Institute.

Since 1992, Institute has received more than 100 local, national and international volunteers.

## Funding Sources

Major operational and infrastructure funds have been received with gratitude from Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, CAPART SIDA in

Sweden, Canadian CIDA, Australian High Commission, German Consulate Mumbai, Baha'i Community and many Charities and individual donors.

## Collaborators:

The Institute has collaborated with Technology Mission on Water; Government of India; School of Energy and Bio Technology Department; School of Social Work and Indore

Maha Vidalya of Devi Ahilya, University of Indore; Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy, Madhya Pradesh Energy Corporation, Bhopal and UNICEF.

## Research and Development of Training Materials

The Institute's training materials have been developed over the past 19 years specifically for rural women, with consideration of their culture, need and understanding. The training has evolved with thorough and continuous

testing, practice and experimentation ,based on the principles of simplicity and participation and using local names for herbs, medicines and techniques, simple language, and indigenous, easily available materials.

## Future Vision

To publish and share concepts, methodology, curriculum and training materials.

To replicate the training model in other areas so as to reach a larger number of women and communities.

To continue research and interaction with professionals, academics, environmentalists and scientific institutions and individuals.

## The Barli Campus: A Home Away from Home

Barli was established in 1985 as the Baha'i Vocational Institute for Rural Women by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of India. In 2001, It became an independent Non -Governmental Organisation, managed and guided by its own Board of Directors. Barli Development Institute For Rural Women is inspired by the teachings of Baha'i Faith.

Twice a year, 75 women from all over India arrive to make the Institute their home for the next six months. Set within a 6-acre campus, it is an oasis of wild herbs and animals such as peacocks and butterflies, and has a joyous and peaceful atmosphere. The campus is well equipped with a workshop, classrooms, computer-lab, library, offices, solar kitchen, dining room, dormitories, staff and volunteer accommodation and with health care facilities.



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